

STEPS OF ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY OF ABUSE

1. Admitting of your abusive behavior. This includes emotional, sexual and physical abuse of past or present partners. You must stop suggesting your partner is “acting hurt” because they are unstable, weak or stupid and stop implying they are trying to turn people against. You must acknowledge the good in you and in another person you have abused, rather than trying to save face by insisting all of your “abusees” are instigators or bad seeds. You must stop all denying and minimizing.

2. Acknowledge that your behavior is a choice, not a loss of control. You need to recognize that during each incident, you have given yourself permission to be abusive and continue to choose how much to let yourself go.

3. Acknowledge that your abusive behavior was wrong, unconditionally. You must identify your typical justifications, and admit they are just excuses to be abusive; like “I just lost control” or “I was just trying to get you to listen!”. You can no longer defend your abuse by pointing out how much your partner gets on your nerves. You need to explain in detail about why your behaviors are totally unacceptable, stop blaming your partner, and make a heartfelt apology. You must admit that your partner’s self-defense, blunt honesty about your hurtful actions, or refusal to be bullied is NOT abuse.

4. Recognize the impact that your abuse has had on your partner, and show empathy. You need to discuss in detail the immediate and enduring effects your abuse has had on your partner; including fear, distrust, depression, anger, and loss of freedom and other rights. You must face your partner to validate their pain, knowing fully that you likely have caused it. During this empathetic description of the damage you have done, you cannot simply revert to self-pity, talking about how painful the experience has been for you/ Apologizing is critical; but you also have to recognize that being genuinely sorry is just the beginning, and meaningless unless you genuinely examine the swath of destruction you have caused.

5. Accept the consequences of your actions.

6. Make amends for the damage you have done. You have to develop a sense that you owe a debt to your partner and to your children as a result of your abusiveness. You can begin reparation by being consistently caring and supportive, talking with people that you have misled in regards to your abuse in admitting to them that you have lied, putting your partners needs before your own without expecting to be congratulated for it, and many more actions related cleaning up the emotional and literal messes that your behaviors have caused. As you do this, you need to accept that you may never be able to fully compensate your partner. Identify in detail your pattern of controlling behaviors and entitled attitudes. You need to speak in detail about the day-to-day tactics of abuse you have used. Accept the need to give up your privileges and do so, this means saying goodbye to double standards.

7. Accept that overcoming abusiveness is likely to be a life-long process. At no time can you claim that your work is done by saying “I’ve bent enough” or complain that you are sick of hearing about your abusiveness or control, and ask when you’re going or planning to get past it. You need to come to terms with the reality of working on your issues for good, and that you may feel the effect of what you have done for many years. Equally important, you must be able to identify your underlying beliefs and values that have driven those behaviors, such as considering that you are entitled to constant attention, looking down on your partner, or believing that you are not responsible for your actions if provoked by a partner.

8. You must treat your partner well from now on. You must honor a commitment to never repeat your abusive, manipulative, coercive, belittling behaviors. Your improvement is not dependent on your partner's good behavior – such as saying you won't call you names as long as your partner does not raise their voice at you. If you backslides, you cannot justify your abusive behaviors by saying “Yeah, I screwed up, but for the three years I behaved, don't I get credit for that? You expect me to be perfect!?” as if your good behavior are chips to spend on occasional abuse.

9. Abandon your distorted, negative picture of your partner and swap it with a more positive and empathetic view. You must stop asserting that your partner's reactions to your abuse are abusive to you, proving you are justified or excused. You must recognize your thought pattern that focuses on and exaggerates your grievances against your partner. As a result, your perceptions of your weaknesses tend to be quite harsh and unforgiving. You need to compliment your partner and pay attention to your strengths and abilities.

10. Be willing to be accountable for your abuse, both past and future. You are no longer above reproach, and this attitude must be replaced with a willingness to accept feedback and criticism about any backsliding.

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*If you are in the need of low or no cost counseling call the
Los Angeles County, Department of Mental Health at 1-800-854-7771*
